

# Mountain Sentinel.

"WE GO WHERE DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES POINT THE WAY;—WHEN THEY CEASE TO LEAD, WE CEASE TO FOLLOW."

BY JOHN G. GIVEN.]

EBENSBURG, THURSDAY, MAY 24, 1849.

VOL. 5.—NO. 33.

## SELECT TALE.

From Scott's Weekly Paper.

I WILL NEVER MARRY A MECHANIC.

BY LILLIE LILBERNE.

Angel forms are watching o'er me,  
On my brow I feel their breath,  
And it cools the brain that's burning  
With the leprosy of death.

Faint, weak, languid and exhausted, Clinton Courtland opened his eyes to the slight morning light that was admitted into his chamber. Catharine stood bending over him. He recognized her and faintly smiled, and attempted to speak. With a look of alarm she laid her white fingers upon his marble lips and said—

"You must not speak; the physician has forbidden it; the slightest exertion may injure you."

One grateful look he bent upon her pale face as she turned away. Lawrence too was there. He approached and, taking the almost lifeless hand of his cousin within his own, laid his brow upon it to hide his feelings.

Catharine laid her hand on the arm of Lawrence. "This must not be," she whispered. "Beware of causing the least agitation and excitement."

Courtland turned away, and bowing to the maiden as he passed, as much as to say—"I have done wrong"—left the room to compose his feelings.

The surgeon had said that nothing but the most watchful care could save him, and this she bestowed—hour after hour, and week after week—unweariedly. All too sometimes sat by his bedside. And Lawrence and Edgar were there. But Catharine was the angel of the sick room.

He had bled much at the lungs, and this kept him weak, though he was slowly recovering.

The visitors had almost all left the springs; yet our little party still remained. But Edgar had announced his intention of leaving; he had been there much longer than he intended.

Brilliant as the light of day was, she felt like death to the heart of P. R. Courtland. And she was the only one who stood as high in his estimation as any lady there. Yet her heart sighed for a preference. Did he even care for her, how many opportunities he might have had of showing it! But no—it was evident his heart was all untouched. Yet his keen, watchful eye seemed sometimes to say he had read hers; but the impression this knowledge made upon him could not be fathomed. Who could read Lawrence Courtland?

The hour has come, and we must part; God help each lonely loving heart. And may each string that doubt hath broken, Be linked together—a truthful token, That we, from this, shall ever be Plighted and pledged eternally.

Catharine Cameron sought for the last time a secluded abode where, with Clinton, previous to his sickness, she had sometimes sat, and painful recollections were flooding to her brain. It was the last day she would ever behold him; the sun would set for the last time upon them beneath one roof, and how desolate would be her heart!

Would he ever think of her! O, could she but live in his remembrance—she would ask no more.

Clinton entered unexpectedly, and with an easy and refined air, sat down by her, and appearing not to notice her tears and confusion, said—

"I understand by your cousin that you leave for the North to-morrow, and O, Miss Cameron, how can I ever thank you sufficiently for what, for all, you have done for me? How can I ever reward you—you to whom, in reality, I believe I owe my life?"

"Hush, sir!" Catharine found words to say—"Do not speak of it—it is nothing—nothing more than—"

"Then you would have done for any one else," interrupted the invalid mechanic in a dejected tone.

"Have I done more than duty demanded?" the maiden asked in a tremulous voice.

"And yet we may perform acts of duty with different feelings. It may be a cross—it may be a pleasure."

Catharine was silent, and he resumed in a low and melancholy, yet musical, voice—

"To me—much as I have endured, much as I have suffered—the long and lingering hours of helplessness have been the happiest I have ever known; for there was one dearer to me than life who watched over me. Yes, I could even pray for weakness and sickness if woman's fond and faithful heart was caring for me."

Catharine bent her head still lower, but her confusion was apparent. Clinton took her hand in his and continued—

"May I not hope that the hallowed devotion bestowed upon me in those days of debility, will not be withdrawn now? But

perhaps that was only pity—all you have to bestow on a neglected and rejected mechanic."

The maiden raised her drooping head, and with difficulty articulated—

"If you think thus of me, Mr. Courtland, then indeed am I unworthy of another thought from you."

"Forgive me, Miss Cameron,—forgive me. I have wounded your feelings. I meant it not. Perhaps I am too sensitive upon this subject—perhaps I am too distrustful. May be I too keenly feel all of slight and wrong."

And after some moment's pause, he went on—

"You know, dear Miss Cameron, my station in life; you know of my prospects, my character—all this you have heard from Edgar, and with regard to them I have nothing to offer, and will only add—that I love you; that I have long regarded you as an object of tenderness; and now—now say, dearest, that my passion is returned—say that it is, that you will be mine!"

Catharine trembled, and the rich blood flushed to her shaded temple, and, without lifting her eyes, she replied, falteringly—

"Ere I answer let me beg of you to go back with me to the past. We have met before."

Clinton started—turned pale, and a convulsive shudder shook his weakened frame.

"What! before?" he almost gasped. "When? Where?"

Catharine, attributing his emotion to surprise, answered—

"Do you remember the frail child that bathed your sunken temples, on board the Washington, years ago, and who—" she hesitated.

"And who gave me this?" and he drew the rich phial with tangled ribbons from his vest, and resumed, musingly—

"And what a balm your childish carresses wrought on a heart that was writhing with such agony as I pray Heaven I may never know again."

And with startling abruptness he went on—

"And did you then learn who I was—my name?"

And the deep, dark, searching, scorching look he fastened on her face, told of the mighty feelings struggling in his soul.

But Catharine betrayed no confusion. She did not even lift her eyes. She was looking on that one scene that had lived in her memory for years. And she answered thoughtfully—

"I did not—perhaps my father did."

Clinton drew a long, free breath. The weight on his heart had been too oppressive; and he murmured tenderly—

"This is a blessing I had not looked for. I had not expected again to see the angel of that hour; but in those dreadful days of suffering that followed, I still saw that sweet, childlike figure bending over me, and cooling my fevered brow. And now, thou hast come to me again and calmed my heart with kindness. Surely, you are my guardian angel; and all I have to repay in return is love, love the pure and the true, love that hath never been proffered to woman before."

"And it is all I ask—more; I dare not accept it."

And the maiden bent her face upon her hands and wept.

Clinton drew her nearer to him, and poured his pleading prayers upon her heart, in winning whisperings, in earnest eloquence.

There was no word in answer; but one stifled sob, and he knew her heart was all his own.

"Did I not consult my feelings," he observed, after an interval of some minutes, "I fear I should forget what is due to yours and the restrictions of delicacy, and plead with you to accompany me home now, as my bride. To that home, humble as it may be. And will only ask that you will name the time when I may come to conduct you to it."

And Catharine listened. O how willingly would she have dispensed with all, could she have been permitted to watch his returning health, and administer to his every wish and want.

And may he read all this as he gazed earnestly and affectionately on her changeable features; but if he did, he seemed resolved to adhere to his first resolution, and whispered as he watched her fluctuating countenance—

"But you have not answered me, dearest; when will we meet again? When may I come to claim my own?"

"Name your own time," she responded, falteringly. "I will be ready."

And ere they returned to the house, the day, the week, the month was fixed upon.

It was evening. A lady who had brought her three daughters to the same watering place for the last eight years, like so many articles of merchandise, shrouded and placed in the most advantageous position, without getting them off her hands—remarked to Clinton Courtland

—the first time she had designed to notice him.

"It seems, sir, that your cousin is very fastidious, and unconscionable difficult to please; for it is reported that there is not a lady in his native city that he would marry; and that he has travelled all over Europe without meeting any one he deemed worthy to share his hand and fortune."

And this seemed one confronting consolation for his so completely neglecting her row of rouge redeeming movables—for sale.

The mechanic smiled, and was about to reply, when Lawrence came into the apartment. The mother and her daughters soon retired. Edgar with that everlasting expression of mischief on his lip, said, addressing Mr. Courtland—

"I heard a lady just say, that had three several fair daughters to market, and has had these dozen years, that there was not a single lady in New York that Lawrence Courtland would marry."

"She must have a very exalted opinion of me then," was the dry response.

"And it is so, Courtland!" Edgar laughingly asked of Clinton.

"I do not think he ever made the inquiry," the other rejoined, his dark eye lighting up with something like pleasure, "for fear perhaps that he would be successful. Is not this it, cousin?"

"It may be—I was not listening," and Lawrence leaned his head upon his hand in deep dejection, until roused from his abstraction by some one inquiring of him about his travels abroad—about the countries and curiosities—the castles on the Rhine and the ruins of the Rhone; and then he went on with an ease and facility that astonished, leaving no room for further questioning, and about as correctly as a person would do who had read, with close attention, of the places and things described.

Poor Alla! She had feared and felt the fascinations of the courted Courtland—and they had parted forever, without one seeming regret on his part, or one wish, one request to be remembered.

Will he come—will he come? Methinks I hear His footstep light and free: Will he come—will he come? O how I fear He has half forgotten me. And then—then—but say, say— Each darkened doubt be still away.

Catharine Cameron's wedding-day was near at hand. The bridal paraphernalia had been sent home, and she with Alla was examining it. It was plain, but costly and elegant. And Alla playfully remarked—

"This dress is just like you, Catharine; it is rich and graceful, and delicate, with a kind of mysterious-bewitching, bewitchingness, that cannot be described, that cannot be resisted; and it is too beautiful—too—too lovely—for—"

She hesitated.

"For a mechanic's wife. Let me finish the sentence for you," the maiden returned, with a sad smile. "But," she continued, "I am not very ambitious; perhaps that station would best suit me."

"But I will never marry a mechanic!" Alla said, for at least the ninety and ninth time.

"Something I have heard you say before, sister dear," responded a voice at the door, and Edgar entered the apartment, and added—"But would you not marry Lawrence Courtland now, if he were a mechanic?"

And the merry, mischievous light in his eye had changed to a serious, searching gaze. Alla colored as she answered—

"But that is impossible—altogether so, you know."

"Yet you have not replied to my question, fair sis."

"I should think I had, satisfactorily."

And the maiden's proud lip slightly curled.

"Would you, Alla, would you marry Lawrence Courtland, if he were really a mechanic?"

"I have said. But he will never be one," was spoken with a restless quickness.

"No—but if he were, and should offer you his hand, would you accept it, were there but that one obstacle in the way?"

And there was a provoking smile on the speaking lip of Edgar.

Alla's pride was roused, and in a scornful, irritated tone she replied—

"No! I would sooner die first!"

The brother's brow was somewhat clouded, and he responded—

"Sister, you will one day marry a mechanic, else set me down for a false prophet—that's all."

"A false fool! I had almost said," Alla rejoined, half indignant at the other's jesting language.

Edgar smiled most annoyingly, and taking pencil and paper from his pocket, wrote a few minutes, and then read over to himself in a low tone, yet distinctly audible—

"I will never marry a mechanic. No! I will sooner die first. False fool, &c."

And then, deliberately folding up the page, put it in his pocket-book. And then, turning to his sister, said gravely—

"I shall keep these wise sayings as choice as the commandments, to read to you some day."

"I declare, Edgar, you are enough to provoke the patience of Job."

"Yes—but then that honest old Patriarch never had any sisters that married mechanics."

And carelessly humming an Italian Opera air, he left the room.

The wedding-day was to be on the morrow, and yet Clinton Courtland had not yet come. And but once had Catharine heard from him, and then he mentioned that his health was better, and that he should be there the appointed day. It was now the evening previous, and her uneasiness could scarcely be concealed, and yet she made an effort to hide her feelings, and even conversed more, and with more spirit than usual, that the family need not suspect she had a single fear.

Night had come. The effort had been sustained through the day, but could be no longer. And as the shadows of evening gathered around, her voice was hushed in her heart.

And then Edgar took up the discourse, but he too gradually sank into silence, and leaned his head against the casement lost in thought. Mr. and Mrs. Emerson, and Alla continued to converse on indifferent subjects as if to draw Catharine away from her own darkened thoughts.

The street door bell rang. Edgar started, and Catharine felt the hot heart's blood rushing to her aching brow; it was only a wood Sawyer come to demand his day's wages. Another—it was but the newspaper carrier. And again—it was a business man wishing to see Mr. Emerson private.

Again the bell rang—and it was only a gentleman inquiring if John Smith lived there.

Every knell fell like an iceberg weight on the crushed heart of Catharine Cameron.

Edgar had risen, and flinging open a window stood watching the approach of a carriage. It stopped. A gentleman leaped lightly from it, and up the broad steps, and touched the bell. Edgar turned.

"He is come—he has come," was his joyful exclamation; as he snatched the hand of his cousin, who had sank back half fainting into her seat, and burying her face in her quivering hands, burst into tears.

This sudden revulsion of feeling was too much. Edgar stooped down, and kissing her brow, darted out to meet his friend; and in a moment returned with Clinton Courtland, who, bending a knee beside his affianced one, withdrew her hands from her face, and pressing them in his own, read in those tear-wet, shrinking eyes, a love as deep, as strong and pure as ever dwelt in the heart of woman.

Not here—it is too gorgeous a place For this humble and happy bride— The life would shrink from the golden vase. To its own free home 'neath the tide.

The mechanic and his bride had reached his native city. As they drew near one of the most splendid mansions within it Catharine, involuntarily exclaimed, as she looked from the window: "What an elegant edifice!" It was indeed so. The eye could never tire in gazing on it.

All that taste and talent, wealth and skill could bestow was freely lavished there.

Scarcely had she spoken ere the carriage drew up at the broad marble steps that led to the portico. The floor of that was marble, and the parian pillars that supported it were carved in the Greek Corinthian, and the capitals so rich and graceful, and symmetrical, were of the ornate and Ionic.

There was a slight smile on the husband's lip as Catharine looked to him for an explanation, and he said, as he pushed open the carriage door with negligent grace, "This proud and princely mansion you so much admire is the residence of—is the home of Lawrence Courtland. He wished us to stop here to night, and as I gave him my word I would, we will not proceed further; and yet—" he added the smile almost fading from his faded lip.

"And yet this may be impolitic, for after viewing all this splendour and magnificence, the mechanic's cottage will find but few attractions—will seem even humbler and humbler."

Catharine shrank back in the vehicle, and forcing a gay tone, replied—"Then if you really think so, we had better proceed here to-night, as it is but a mile or two, you say, and I am not fatigued at all. Let us go there directly then—pardon me—I would rather."

"Excuse me, dearest, but I always meet my promises—though it may be at the eleventh hour," he added gaily, as he lifted Catharine down the steps, and drawing her shrinking arm within his led her up

the marble stairs. She said no more, but the tears came into her eyes. She could not help it.

They stood on the broad and beautiful landing, and ere the bell was touched, the door was opened by a domestic, whose dress bespoke the gentleman's servant.

And they entered the hall, with its marble floor and stairways; with carvings and mouldings of the most elegant and elaborate workmanship.

The whole countenance of the servant lighted up with animation as he ushered them in, but he did not speak, he only bowed respectfully. Clinton smiled, and held out his hand, which the other warmly grasped in silence, and then hastened on to open the doors of the saloon.

Catharine was startled by the beautiful brilliancy of everything around her, it seemed so like enchantment. And yet she was reared in ease and opulence, was accustomed to every luxury—in early life had moved in the first circles, but she had never seen aught like this. The finishing and furnishing seemed designed by the same exquisite taste. Rare and faultless was everything on which the eye could rest. And there was that silent and subdued splendor that universally pleases; the pure and delicate refinement that enchains the attention; that careless concealed magnificence on every side that bewilders the senses and fascinates the fancy. But where was Lawrence?

He came not to greet the guests he had invited. Perhaps he had gone out.—Clinton did not enquire for him, but led his bride to a costly seat with golden gildings, and then rang the bell. A servant girl entered genteelly dressed, with a glad smile, and a half graceful inclination of the head, and took away Catharine travelling habiliments, yet purposely lingered in so doing to gaze for a moment on the fair bride. Clinton soon left apartment.—Catharine heard the sound of many voices in the distance, and it seemed like the mingled welcome of servants on the return of a loved and long absent master. And then she heard her husband speaking in a low voice, near the door, as if giving directions, which he soon after entered, and carefully closed.

Catharine lifted her eyes from the costly adornment around her as he came in, with a slight flush on his pale cheek, and a deeper brilliancy, and a melting tenderness in his dark and dangerous eye, and seating himself beside her spoke, and his low rich voice was ever a music strain.

"Do you not think that the owner of all this cold and costly splendour, would enjoy himself better did he but marry some good and gentle girl, on whom he might place his heart's highest and holiest affections, in whom he could trust, to whom he could look for devotion, whom he could love and live for, and worship, forever?"

"Yet he might not think thus," Catharine responded, evading a direct reply.

"And I have sometimes thought—pursued the husband—that your gay cousin, Miss Emerson, looked not with an eye of indifference on him who was the lion at the Springs."

The fair girl sighed as she replied.—"And would not any preference she might have evinced, or felt, be wholly lost on that fastidious favorite of fortune?"

Clinton hesitated—mused—and then returned—

"On Lawrence Courtland I think it would. He will never regard the fair Alla in any other light than as a friend—or—"

He would be glad to court her among the many lovely links of friendship in life's choice chain. But, my own Catharine, and he drew her hand within his pale and tremulous fingers, and bent his fascinating eye on hers, "But, do you not think you would be happier amid all this wealth, and luxuriance and magnificence you see here, than the lonely occupant of a mechanic's cottage?"

"O! no, no, no," the gentle girl answered with sudden energy; "not for the world would I be mistress of a mansion like this."

Courtland smiled, and in a playful tone returned—

"Then you are not very ambitious I perceive."

The warm blood struggled to the cheek of Catharine as she answered faintly, falteringly, while her face was bent from his burning, searching eye: "And yet I am ambitious to deserve, to retain, to make happy, to bless the noble heart I hope I have won."

"May God in mercy grant that Lawrence Courtland may be ever deserving the high and holy heart of the fair and faultless being, that the humble, despised mechanic hath sought and obtained."

And the speaker's lip quivered as he bent it to the beautiful brow of his wife, and his sweet and startling voice was hushed thereon. Catharine felt a shock through her whole frame. The truth struck on every throb, and springing to her feet, as if to escape from thought, from destiny, from

the proud and lofty one from whose embrace she broke, with a stifled groan fell back insensible into the arms of her husband. He wished no eye to be a witness to this scene, and himself applied what restoratives were nigh for her recovery.—He bled her temples, he kissed her cold lips, he begged her pardon, he whispered his love and constancy, and yet long she lay pale and inanimate, and senseless to all his endearment.

And when she did revive the consciousness of her peculiar position startled the frozen life-blood to her cheek and lip, and burying her face in his bosom, sobbed like a lone forsaken child.

For moments Lawrence did not interrupt this fearful flow of passionate feeling. He only drew her nearer to him. Tears would calm and balm her excited and quivering nerves. It had it did. And there—from her grief-stricken depths a prayer had gone up to Heaven; and peace drew its promise bow over the heart harp's troubled, tremulous strings; and they told their accustomed minstrelsy, though touchingly, and tremblingly as she lifted her head and said:

"Oh! is this, is this a dream; or are you but mocking me. But do not, oh do not hate me for this weakness that I cannot help."

Tears stood in the eyes of the husband as he replied—"Hate you, my own, my own; you, who are my hope, my life, my all, save Heaven. I would not exchange the bliss of this one moment for all that the world can ever give. Oh! if you but knew how my heart has longed for sympathy, for fellowship, for companionship, for—love. Oh how—for years—I would have given all I possessed, all, everything, for one loud and faithful smile on which I could lay all trustingly, and hopefully, my aching heart and its shadowed wishes.—Listen, love, and bear with me. You think I have deceived you; I only suffered a deception which I did not choose to explain away. Ere I arrived at manhood my parents died. And I felt the blow most keenly, most severely. I loved them affectionately and reverently, with all the power of a sensitive and imaginative heart; and their vast possessions were mine.—But far more to be prized than all was the fair and fragile orphan they left to a brother's care. Oh! what a high and holy object I now had in life to do—to protect—to live for her. My life at any moment I would have given to have saved her one single pang. Angel that she was too pure for earth, and Heaven called her home."

And then—there—when I gazed on the lovely creature for the last time, I dared to murmur at the high behest.

"Oh how alone I was among the mockeries of the world. Even my cousin's assiduous kindness could not soothe me. I was a wayward and passion-prone youth. I forgot the many blessings that were around me, regretting those that were lost forever. My health declined, and my physicians ordered me abroad. I was on my way to Europe when I met with you on that vessel's deck. Oh! how your gentle kindness reminded me of my lost sister; and your voice thrilled on my heart like hers."

"From that hour, for weeks, I lay on a sea coast city, sick and helpless. As soon as I was sufficiently recovered I embarked on my journey. It was years ere I returned. But my health had received a shock from which I fear it will never recover. And this has been meant to me in mercy; for beneath the chastenings of the Almighty I have found the wisdom that willed me to worship Him. To look to Him, to love Him, to trust Him, to say from the heart—'Thy will be done.'"

"For my wealth and station I have been flattered and fawned upon until I am sick of the homage where there is no heart; and have sighed for one all true and truthful, that I might worship."

"Many a fine lady I might have led to the altar here—many a proud and titled one in foreign lands. But would she be as fond and faithful in adversity as in prosperity. You may deem me jealous and distrustful—perhaps I have had reason to be. Experience has taught me a lesson, not all the linguist's logic could have done. When we went to those Southern Springs, it seemed that our arrival was expected. All but Edgar Emerson were strangers to us, and all intuitively greeted my gay and elegant cousin as the courtly Courtland, and me as the lowly mechanic. Clinton's lips opened to rectify the mistake, but I motioned him to silence, and Edgar whispered—'Let the delusion pass.' My cousin at first conscientiously rejected the idea, but his objections were at length over-ruled. He had done nothing to favor the deception. And he, you well know, was the favorite of the day, and I was thankful that I could be free from senseless compliments, and ambitious attentions.—He read then a leaf in life he never perused before. So have I. But among the

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